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University of Maine Community Pieces_Farewell, sweet Dane!

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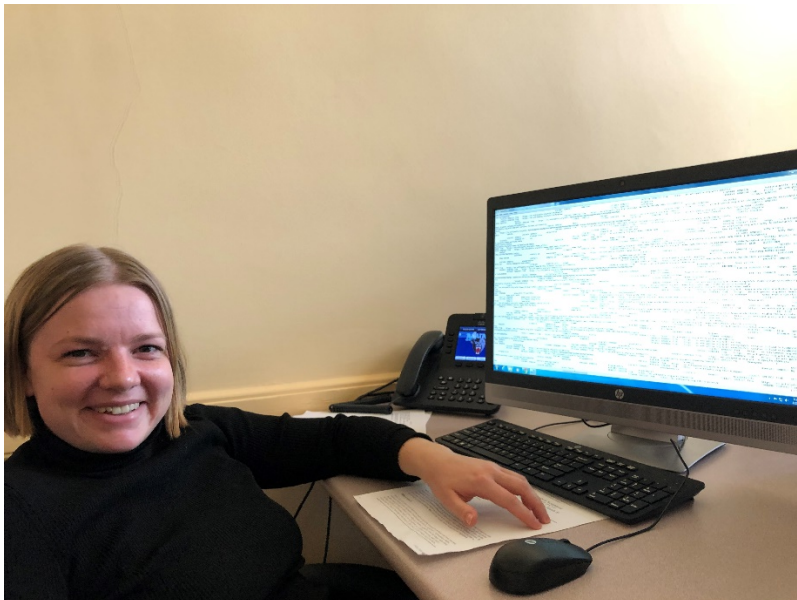
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Thursday, March 19, 2020 – Farewell, sweet Dane!

After days of growing anxiety and uncertainty (how often those emotions are paired these days!), my Danish doctoral student, Maja Kruse, decided to heed her country's advice and head for home. As I write, her plane from Portland Jetport should be airborne en route to Chicago O'Hare. There she will roam the nearly empty gates in the international terminal for several hours while waiting for the long-haul on SAS to Copenhagen. She booked a window seat on that plane, with a sea of empty seats around hers, three full rows ahead and behind. I hope they give her steak and champagne! A geographer always wants a window seat when she can get it. This time it has the added draw of being marginally less prone to infection from recirculated air on board.

I hated to say goodbye to Maja. She is a sunny, funny young woman, a terrific researcher, dogged and thorough, and immensely practical and honest. I will miss her good humor and the dense, earthy rye bread she made, every week sparing a loaf for me. There is no question that she should leave. The United States is a dreadful place to be ill, with Covid-19 or anything else, given the shameful shortcomings in every part of our health care system, particularly testing kits, critical care beds, and care of any kind for those without health insurance or ready dosh. Maja will be with family in her native country, a country with universal health care, one that cares enough about its people to be strict about enforcing social distancing. Maja told me during our farewells that the government decided on a fine of \$200 per person for any gathering whose size exceeds the current 10-person limit – "Enough," she said with a smile, "to make it hurt."

Maja will continue to pay the rent for her one-bedroom apartment in Dryden Terrace, "So that I will have a place to return." That hopeful gesture buoys my flagging spirits. While she is away, I will tend her little jade plant, a perky, patient reminder of my Danish student and friend.



Maja Kruse in the Digital & Spatial History Lab, with the first data dump of Polish place names from Wikidata, which will inform her development of an historical Holocaust ghettos digital gazetteer. Photo taken the week before spring break, circa 3/10/2020, before the University announced the move to remote instruction and told students not to come back to campus after spring break.



Maja's little jade plant, on the bathroom windowsill on the damp, chilly day of her departure, 3/19/2020.